



## **2018 Wisconsin Elk Hunt Frequently Asked Questions**

Update 30 April 2018

### ***The Elk Herd and Hunt:***

#### **What triggered Wisconsin to finally have an elk hunting season?**

Wisconsin's elk herd has steadily grown since the release of 25 elk in 1995. Rules outlined in Administrative Code and State Statutes required that Wisconsin have a minimum of 200 elk living within the Clam Lake elk range before initiating a hunt. We are now at the point where we feel that a sustainable hunt can occur on an annual basis, limiting the harvest to bulls only for the time being. This hunt will provide an exciting hunting opportunity, and will contribute funding for the growing management needs of the elk herds.

#### **Why has it taken over 20 years for Wisconsin to have an elk hunt?**

Other states that have restored elk have either waited a long time to have a hunt or started with a much larger "starting population". Michigan, for example, started their elk population in 1918 with 7 elk and had their first hunt 46 years later in 1964. In contrast, Kentucky started their population in 1997 with 1550 elk re-introduced over a four-year period in a 16 county-wide area and had their first hunt in 2001.

The most recent attempt to re-establish a Wisconsin elk herd started in 1995 with just 25 elk. This started as an "experiment" to see if elk could become established in the current Wisconsin landscape. Elk have low productivity rates unlike deer and other mammals; elk cows don't produce calves until 2.5 years of age and are more productive when they reach 3.5+ years of age. An adult cow only has one calf per year. When elk restoration begins with a small number, any mortality is significant (predation or accidents). After the population gets bigger, these factors become less significant.

In the past 20+ years, elk in Wisconsin have shown strong growth rates and have adapted to the Wisconsin landscape. In addition, we have learned much about what elk need to flourish in Wisconsin. We have worked with our many partners to promote habitat improvements that not only benefit elk but other wildlife species. We have captured existing elk and moved small groups of them to start new "sub-groups" of elk. This was done to increase herd growth. Much has happened in the past 20+ years to restore elk in Wisconsin and the best is yet to come!

#### **Why are only bulls allowed in the harvest?**

The long-term elk population goal of the greater Clam Lake herd is 1400. As we continue to manage for herd growth, females will be protected to maximize annual calf recruitment. The herd currently contains a high proportion of bulls, and many of those bulls do not participate in the rut due to the social and rutting behavior of elk who utilize "harems" (one bull with multiple cows). The elk population contains a high percentage of bulls, many of which are over 10 years old.

#### **What is the current elk population estimate in the Clam Lake elk range?**

The March 2018 estimate is approximately 185 in total scattered throughout the range in several groups. We anticipate that approximately 45 calves will be born this spring, projecting the total population to at a level comfortably above the 200-minimum population size that initiates a hunt.

**Why isn't the hunt occurring in the Black River elk range?**

The elk reintroduction effort in Jackson County's Black River elk range started just a few years ago in 2015. 73 elk have been released there. The department and our partners agree that the herd will need several years of growth before hunting is offered. Current rules require that at least 150 elk make up that herd before a hunt will be considered.

**Elk from Kentucky have been released in the past two years. Will they be protected?**

Yes. Since only bulls may be harvested, and because a high number of the elk that were brought from Kentucky are cows and calves, many are automatically protected based on their sex. The area where this hunt is taking place is centered on the vicinity of the Town of Clam Lake, whereas all reintroduced elk from Kentucky were released in the Flambeau River State Forest about 35-40 miles south where hunting will not occur.

**What if I shoot a bull that is wearing a radio collar?**

Many of the elk in the herd wear a radio collar used for monitoring and research. Collared animals are perfectly legal for harvest. If the collar is functioning properly, we will likely ask the hunter to return the collar to us so that it can be used again.

***Applying for an elk hunting license:***

**How do I apply for an elk hunting license?**

Interested hunters will apply online using their GoWild account, just as they would for bear, turkey, etc. or they may do so at any one of our many license vendors throughout the state.

**What is the deadline to apply for an elk hunting license?**

The application is expected to be available by May 1<sup>st</sup> and the final deadline to apply is May 31<sup>st</sup>.

**How much will it cost to apply for an elk hunting license?**

The cost to apply is \$10.

**Can I apply more than once per year?**

No, just like other big game species applications, only one application may be submitted per person. However, you may purchase as many raffle tickets from the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation as you wish (see details below).

**Will preference points be awarded for elk like they are for bear?**

No. The drawing for an elk hunting license is strictly a random drawing and preference points will not be awarded. If a preference point system were utilized, anyone who did not apply the very first year would have virtually no chance to ever be awarded a tag in the future considering so few tags awarded to so many anticipated applicants. Without preference points, all applicants will have an equal opportunity each year.

**If I win either the state drawing or RMEF raffle drawing, can I apply again in the future?**

As law currently stands, receiving an elk hunting license is a once-in-a-lifetime event. You will not be able to apply through the state application process, and will not be allowed to win the RMEF raffle.

**How much will the hunting license cost if I am one of the lucky hunters who is drawn?**

A Wisconsin resident elk hunting license is \$49.

**Can non-residents apply?**

When 100 or less elk hunting licenses are allocated, only Wisconsin residents may generally apply, with exceptions for nonresident Purple Heart recipients and Armed Forces members who exhibit proof of meeting qualifying criteria. Additional details available at [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov), keyword "Purple Heart" and "Armed Forces". When more than 100 elk hunting licenses are allocated, both residents and nonresidents may apply.

**When will the drawing winners be selected?**

The drawing for those who apply through GoWild will be completed in early June. The winner of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation raffle will be drawn August 11<sup>th</sup> (see RMEF section for more details).

**How will license winners be notified?**

Each license winner will receive a phone call telling them of their success in the drawing, and will be provided with additional information about the hunt, elk hunter education requirements, etc.

**Where do the revenues from the application fees go?**

By law, \$7 from each elk hunting application is earmarked for elk management and research in Wisconsin. The remaining \$3 is designated for covering administrative fees, vendor fees, etc.

**Can an elk hunting license be transferred to another hunter?**

Yes. There are two circumstances under which an elk hunting license can be transferred:

1. The winner may transfer their license to a resident youth hunter 17 years old or younger.
2. They may transfer the license to a resident holding a valid Class A, B, C, or D disabled permit.

To transfer the license to another hunter, the application to do so must be received at least 15 days prior to the start of the season. An exception to the 15-day requirement is if the hunter dies before the first day of the season. Additional details on transferring an elk tag are available on the "Awarded permit or harvest authorization transfers" web page: <https://dnr.wi.gov/permits/permittransfers.html> (visit [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov), keyword search "awarded permits").

**Can active military personnel defer the use of their license if they win?**

Yes, an elk license issued to a member of the Armed Forces or National Guard who is on active duty and unable to hunt may be deferred.

**If someone transfers their elk hunting license, can they still apply in the future?**

Current statute specifies that a person may be issued or transferred only one elk hunting license in his or her lifetime. While law allows the holder of an elk tag to transfer that tag to a youth or disabled permit holder, the act of holding the elk license/tag prior to its transfer counts as a lifetime win. As such, the transferor may not apply through the state drawing, be a RMEF raffle winner, or receive an elk tag transfer in the future (unless the current law is changed). You may purchase RMEF raffle tickets in future years, but would be wise to put another eligible recipient's name on the ticket because you would not be allowed to win due to the fact that we could not issue you the license.

**Can someone sell their elk hunting license to another hunter?**

No, selling the license is strictly prohibited. No compensation of money or other considerations of any kind may be accepted for the transfer.

### ***Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) Elk License Raffle:***

#### **Why does RMEF get one of the licenses?**

Several years ago, legislation was passed that allowed the Elk Foundation to raffle one elk hunting license during each of the first five elk hunting seasons to help financially support elk management in Wisconsin. RMEF has been a major supporter of Wisconsin's elk reintroduction. They have invested over \$8 million on elk reintroduction, management and research, as well as outdoor education projects, land protection, habitat improvement, and much more.

#### **How will RMEF award their license?**

RMEF is awarding the tag in a raffle. When legislation was passed, it was desired that every Wisconsin citizen would have an equal opportunity to win the tag, rather than have it auctioned to the highest bidder.

#### **How do I buy RMEF elk hunt raffle tickets?**

RMEF will make tickets available in a variety of ways. Tickets will be sold at RMEF banquets and other events throughout the summer. Elk Foundation volunteers will also be provided with a supply to sell. Finally, tickets may be ordered from the RMEF web site at [www.RMEF.org/Wisconsin](http://www.RMEF.org/Wisconsin).

#### **How much are the tickets?**

Each raffle ticket will be sold for \$10, and you may enter as many times as you wish.

#### **When will RMEF raffle tickets be available for purchase?**

RMEF raffle tickets are expected to go on sale in May and continue through early August.

#### **When will RMEF draw the raffle winner?**

The winner will be drawn at the RMEF Wisconsin State Banquet, currently planned for August 11. Information about attending the event will be available from RMEF later this spring.

#### **Where do the proceeds from the raffle go?**

All raffle proceeds from the sale of RMEF raffle tickets are earmarked for elk management in Wisconsin.

### ***State draw vs. RMEF raffle draw:***

#### **Why is the state drawing so early (June) while the RMEF raffle drawing is later (August)?**

With this being the first year of an elk hunt, one of our main goals with the state application process is to allow ample time for people to apply while also giving the four tag winners as much time as possible to plan and prepare for their once-in-a-lifetime hunting experience. We will be ramping up our communications to ensure that hunters are well aware of the application deadline, and don't feel that extending it longer will be necessary to maximize interest.

In contrast, the RMEF is conducting their own outreach campaign to promote the hunt and maximize raffle ticket sales through internet sales and at multiple fundraisers throughout the summer. Raffle tickets will contain the draw date, so all buyers will know full well that there will not be as much time to plan for the hunt as those who draw in the state application drawing.

### ***Where to hunt:***

**Where will the hunt take place?**

All elk hunting in 2018 will occur in the northern half of the area designated as the Clam Lake elk range within Ashland, Bayfield, Price, and Sawyer County. No hunting will occur for elk in the southern half of the Clam Lake elk range, nor in the Black River elk range in Jackson County.

**Will it be hard to find a place to hunt if I draw the tag?**

No. Public land makes up approximately 65% of the total land area the Clam Lake elk range. These are U.S. Forest Service lands of the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest. Maps of the CNNF may be obtained from the Forest Service. In addition, there may be lands open for hunting under the Open Managed Forest Law program, or Forest Crop Law program. Refer to the DNR web site for more details and enrolled lands.

**Can I hunt elk on private land?**

Yes, as long as you have permission from the landowner before entering their land.

**Are there places to stay in the area?**

Yes. While somewhat remote from larger towns, the Clam Lake area has ample accommodations that include several Northwoods hotels, resorts, cabin rentals, and campgrounds. There are also several restaurants, as well as groceries, fuel, etc. in the area.

***Hunter Education Class requirements:*****Will elk hunters be required to take an elk hunter education class?**

Yes, all license winner will be required to attend before their elk hunting license will be issued or posted to their GoWild account.

**What will be taught in the class?**

Hunters will be introduced to a variety of topics related to elk management and research, history of the Wisconsin reintroduction, hunt preparation, rules and regulations of the hunt, registration requirements, disease testing requirements, and much more.

**Where will the class it be held?**

The location is yet to be determined. Our intention is to hold the class in a central location that is most convenient to the required participants.

**When will it be held?**

We anticipate the class will occur in late August or early September.

**Is there a fee for the class?**

No, the course is free of charge.

**Can I take the class, even if I don't draw a tag?**

Probably not. With only 5 hunters, our desire is to give them very personal attention in a small venue that is easy to plan for. Considering the likelihood of receiving a tag, it is not our desire to have dozens or hundreds of participants. That said, if a youth hunter or someone who may need assistance would like to bring a parent, mentor, etc., they will be encouraged and welcome.

We also have intentions of developing a great deal of on-line information in the format of a course. This is not likely to be completed this fall.

**What if I can't attend on the planned date?**

With such a small number of participants, we will deal with this issue if/when the situation arises.

**Do I need to pass an official hunter safety class to receive my license?**

Yes, if you intend to hunt alone, you are required to comply with same hunter education requirements as are in place for all hunting activities in Wisconsin. Mentored hunting is also allowed, so someone who has not obtained hunter education requirements may still participate with a qualified mentor. The elk hunter education/orientation course does not meet the hunter education requirement.

**Does the mentor need to be licensed?**

Yes, the mentor must hold a current, valid Wisconsin hunting license of any type.

**Can the mentor carry a weapon?**

The mentor may carry a weapon if hunting other game, such as deer during the archery deer season, or if the mentor possesses a concealed carry permit. The mentor is not authorized to kill an elk for a mentee unless dispatching a wounded elk for a mentee who is age 17 or younger. See [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov) keyword "mentored hunting" for full details.

***Season Details:*****What are the elk hunting season dates for state hunters (i.e. non-tribal)?**

October 13-November 11. Any unsuccessful hunters during that period may try again December 13-21.

**What are elk hunters required to carry in the field as proof of hunting eligibility?**

Elk hunters must carry proof of their elk hunting license and elk carcass tag.

- Proof of a license may include an original or reprinted paper copy, a Go Wild conservation card, a Go Wild-authenticated Wisconsin driver's license or a digital PDF file issued by the department and displayed on an electronic device.
- For the elk carcass tag, only an original or reprinted paper copy is accepted.

**If my buddy draws a license, can I go along?**

Yes, an elk hunter may bring additional spectators on the hunt. We hope and expect that many people will want to experience this historic hunt, even if they are not drawn for a tag. Having extra people along may be particularly helpful in recovering an elk out of the field. There is no limit to the number of spectators who may tag along, or help after an animal is harvested. Group bagging is not allowed, so only the person issued the elk hunting license may hunt or shoot an elk.

**Is high visibility clothing required?**

Currently, there is no requirement to wear blaze orange or blaze pink. However, it is highly recommended that at least some piece of highly visible clothing (vest, hat, etc.) be worn. Other types of hunting will be underway during this period in addition to both tribal and non-tribal elk hunting, so safety should be a high priority.

**What weapons are allowed?**

Elk may be hunted with bow, crossbow, muzzleloader, centerfire handgun, or centerfire rifle. If the weapon is legal for deer hunting, it is legal for elk hunting.

**What must be done upon harvesting an elk?**

Similar to bear carcass tags, the elk carcass tag must be immediately validated by removing the bottom portion (validation stub). Hunters are encouraged to protect paper tags in a plastic, sealable baggie. Then, the tag must be attached to the elk before the hunter leaves the carcass. If you leave it, tag it!

### **Can I cut my elk into quarters to make it easier to get it out of the field?**

Yes, elk may be divided just as a deer may be divided into as many as five pieces. The head must remain attached to one of the five parts of the carcass, and the bones must remain as part of each piece. In other words, the elk cannot be “boned out” as is common on western elk hunts. The hide and lower legs, if removed, do not count as one of the five parts, but all parts other than the internal organs must be removed from the field. Only one elk that has been quartered may be stored or transported at a time prior to registration, but quartered elk can be transported with other intact elk.

### ***Chippewa Tribes and the elk hunt:***

#### **Why are the tribes entitled to half of the harvest quota?**

The Chippewa tribes reserved their right to hunt, fish and gather off reservation when they signed Treaties with the United States. These federally-recognized treaty rights allow them to hunt on public lands within the Ceded Territory of northern Wisconsin, as well as, reserved for the Chippewa tribes up to 50% of the total harvest for a variety of wildlife, including elk. The tribes have been strong supporters of the elk reintroduction efforts and have contributed resources as well. In addition, elk hunting has high cultural significance to the Chippewa tribes.

#### **How many elk are the tribes allowed to take?**

The Chippewa tribes may take up to 5 bulls from the Clam Lake herd in 2018. In years ahead, they will continue to be entitled to 50% of the annual quota which will vary from year to year based on the total quota for all hunters.

#### **Can the tribes buy a state elk hunting license?**

Tribal members who are Wisconsin residents can apply through the state drawing, or purchase RMEF elk hunt raffle tickets if they choose to do so.

#### **Can I buy an elk hunting license from the tribes?**

No, non-tribal hunters are not allowed to purchase a license or participate in a tribal elk hunt.

#### **When does the tribal elk hunting season occur?**

Like deer, the Chippewa tribal elk hunting season begins the day after Labor Day and runs through the first Sunday after the first Saturday in January. This fall, that means they are allowed to start hunting on September 4<sup>th</sup> and continue until January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

#### **Are the elk hunting rules for the tribes the same as for state hunters?**

As is often the case, the Chippewa tribes are anticipated to have some rules that differ from those required of state hunters. Tribal elk hunting rules are currently being determined and will be available on the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission's website when complete.

### ***Registration requirements:***

**If I get an elk will I be required to register it?**

Yes, all harvested elk must be registered, just as is required for deer, bear, turkey, etc.

**How will hunters register their elk?**

Successful hunters are required to present their elk IN PERSON by 5 p.m. the day after harvest to have it registered.

**Where will the registration station be located?**

This is yet to be determined. However, hunters will be provided with this information at the elk hunter education class, and will be made known to staff before the hunt.

**Will GameReg be an available option?**

Not initially and likely not to the hunter. All harvested elk must be registered first in person. Once completed, department staff will enter the hunter's elk in GameReg so that a record of harvest appears on the hunter's personal GoWild account.

**Will hunters be required to provide tissue samples for health testing?**

Yes, hunters will be asked to provide tissue samples at the time of registration. These are likely to include lymph nodes for CWD testing, and other tissue. In addition, we may provide hunters with sampling kits and request that they collect various tissue samples that normally would be left in the field during field dressing such a heart and/or lung tissue, liver tissue, etc.